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Messages in Disguise!

"Behold a blessing providence, He hides a smiling face."

Some years ago, a rich young Russian was suspected of having taken part in a conspiracy against the life of the Emperor Nicholas. He was arrested and sent into prison at St. Petersburg.

Generally of a quick and strong temper, the injustice done to him aroused the fiercest passions of his soul. He spent that first long winter night swearing and stamping on the ground, furiously cursing the sovereign of his country who had ordered his arrest, and the Sovereign of heaven who had permitted it. Exasperated at last, he threw himself on his bed of straw, and remained there for many days in mournful silence. On eight wretched days he lay away.

On the evening of the eighth, a venerable minister came to pray with and for him, and to entreat him to accept the invitation of the Emperor, who says, "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The only answer was a loud laugh. On leaving, however, the old man gave him a Bible, begging him to read it. But as soon as the door was closed, the young Russian kicked it into a corner, exclaiming—"I am not going to do with the word of a God who permits me to be a prisoner!" And there the Bible lay, and no one looked at it for many months. But time passed heavily; hours seemed to be, and days months. To relieve his utter weariness, he took up the Bible and read it. The first verse caught his eye impressively: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." But he did not look immediately at it, but returned to his reading anything but the Bible. The next day he opened it again, and was surprised at the wisdom it evidently contained. It was not long before he began to know something of the state of his own heart, and to see that it was "deperately wicked." He began to feel that in the eyes of God he was a sinner.

In his distress, he fell upon his knees, crying out—"O Lord, save me, or I perish! O Lord, wash away my sins. I come out with the precious Blood of Jesus." He prayed with fervor, and now, instead of complaining of injustice, he was mourning over his sinfulness, and thinking of the love of God. He asked to see the old minister;

and the joy of the good man may be imagined when, on entering the cell, he found the once enraged prisoner sitting with a quiet, happy countenance, rejoicing in the hope that Christ had now become his Saviour and Friend. "At first," he said, "I considered my imprisonment a great misfortune; but now I see why I was placed here, and I thank God for it. If I had continued in my prosperity, I

"You have learned from the papers that I am sentenced to be hung. Do not weep, but rejoice, for by the grace of God I am not afraid to die. I know in whom I have believed." The best moment of a Christian's life is his last, for then he is nearest heaven. Death to him is only passing from a world of sin and suffering to heaven, where the redeemed of the Lord will be happy for ever. There I will wait

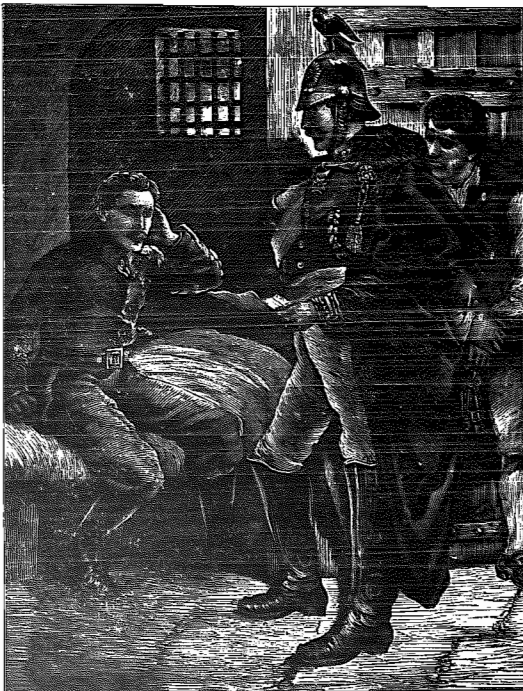
my chains, comfort you and be with you both unto the end!"

On the fatal day, the principal rooms in the splendid mansion of the young nobleman's aunt were draped in mourning, and all were bowed down with grief; yet while they wept they prayed and praised God, and He comforted them.

When the faithful minister left him upon the evening previous to the appointed day, the prisoner fell upon his knees, and in fervent prayer committed his soul to Christ, and then for a few hours quietly slept. Before the dawn of day he was aroused by voices in the passage, and steps evidently approaching his cell. "They come early to take me to the gallows," he thought; and though prepared to die, his heart beat faster. The door of the cell was thrown back, and a tall, noble form entered, which he instantly recognized as that of the Emperor. A man had just been arrested, charged with a share in the conspiracy, and upon his person was found a letter which said—"We have done all we could to enroll W—, but in vain; he declares he will be true to his sovereign until death." The paper was immediately handed to Nicholas, and he had come to release him. "A few hours more," said the Emperor, "and I should have lost in you one of my best friends. Forgive my unconscious error, and accept from me, in remembrance of this day, the rank of general, which I hope you may live to enjoy many happy years."

The liberated young nobleman journeyed as rapidly as possible to the house of his aunt, where he found them all sitting in a room which was hung with deep fields of crape. When he began to speak, and tell them the mercy of God to him, tears of joy and thankfulness ran down their cheeks. As he finished his account, he added—"We have prayed to God in our distress, but we thank Him for His goodness; especially let us thank Him for having given His only-begotten Son to be our Saviour, our Intercessor, our near Friend and Comforter in trouble." And that prayer came from full and grateful hearts; so that the seeming great calamity of his life was a "blessing in disguise."

How often is it that even Christian men chafe and fret beneath trial and affliction, but yet how necessary are they for the building up of their spiritual life and character. And how many of us have been led into the truth itself through discipline and afflictions which, having brought us to God, have indeed proved to us blessings in disguise.



A WELCOME MESSAGE.

should perhaps never have read this holy book, which, by the grace of God, has led me to Jesus."

From that time the captive tranquilly awaited his trial, and soon the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. He listened to the verdict with calmness, asking only permission to write to his aunt and sister. The request was granted, and he sent them the following letter:—

for you, in that blessed land where there will be no more prices, no more sorrow, no more sin. My tears are falling while I write, yet I am happy and full of peace, thinking of the blessedness promised to all who believe in Christ. This happiness will be mine already when these lines reach you. May the Almighty God, whose presence I now enjoy so fully in my cell, and who has made me free in the midst of

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My Saviour's finished work is done,
He's trod the wine press all alone;
And now He condescends to dwell
In those our hearts, He loves us well.

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